

my ejection. All told, 13 had been injured as a result of the parted wire “snapping back” on them. Fortunately, and somewhat amazingly, there were no deaths. I was taken to medical, where I found I was the least injured of those involved.

The medical experience and post-ejection paperwork was an ordeal I never want to repeat. After two hours of waiting for the injured to be treated, I had to urinate in a large cup, give 12 test tubes of blood, and pose for about 30 X-rays. I finally was released four hours later to the confines of our makeshift ready room, where I recreated my 72-hour history on paper for the mishap board.

No amount of training could have prepared me for this scenario. It happened quickly, without warning. I was fortunate to immediately recognize I was in a position with only one alternative: Pull the handle. I pray you never face that decision.

It was determined that the arresting-gear maintenance had been completed improperly, leading to down MAFs on the gear. Having

flown aircraft for more than eight years, it always has been drilled into my head never to take a “down” aircraft. I only can hope my ejection will remind everyone of this rule that, quite obviously, is written in blood.

Every piece of my survival gear worked, from the seat to the SEAWARS and automatic LPU inflation. From the time I pulled the handle until I was in the water was about seven to nine seconds. There wasn’t much time to execute low-altitude IROK procedures (not to mention my shock and confusion), making me a believer of all of the automated systems in our survival gear. I couldn’t thank the PRs and AMEs enough.

Finally, no one was killed because they all wore the appropriate safety gear necessary to work in the most dangerous environment in the world: the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. I think the survivors will agree with me on that point.

I consider myself fortunate to be alive after this mishap. I hope you’ll consider the events I’ve described the next time you trap. 🦅

LCdr. Rivera is with CVW-5.

# Did You Preflight, Sir?

*By PR2(AW) Vernard P. Silver*

I’ve seen many things in my 10 years in the Navy. I’ve been on four cruises and seen much of what the world has to offer. While at my last command, I had seen that planes sometimes have problems that defy gravity. I’ve also seen pilots get dressed in their flight gear without thinking twice about what survival gear they have, or its condition. Some pilots most likely would fly naked if they had the chance.

I enlisted in the Navy in 1994. From boot camp, I went straight to A school. I had the time of my life. I showed up at my first command, an





Most of the pilots would preflight the gear, while some would just “grab and go.” I figured that was “just the way it was,” until I lost a friend in an accident. After that, I have been adamant about accounting for tools and flight-gear preflights. I constantly remind pilots about their preflight, and some still don’t listen.

I have served on many aircraft mishap-investigation teams, and I have found a common thread among those who have survived. All of them had preflighted their survival gear, and knew where everything was and how to use it.

If it weren’t for the parachute riggers’ dedication to making sure aircrew have all their required equipment, and in good condition, we would have lost a lot more pilots. I just have one question for all the new pilots out there, as well as the old ones, “Did you preflight, sir?”

To the riggers, keep ’em safe, keep ’em flying...and don’t give in to the pressure. 🦅

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HS squadron, I loved it there. We had about 35 pilots and aircrew. They would come in, put on their gear, and go fly—paying little attention to their survival gear. I asked my supervisor about their preflight. He just would tell me, “That’s the way things are.” I accepted his answer and went about my business; I did my job to the best of my abilities.

My next command was a test squadron, and those pilots were a little better about doing a preflight inspection of their survival gear. I really understood why having the proper gear was important after a UH-1 crashed in the mountains, and the crew needed their gear.

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